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# BEST PRACTICES IN CONSUMER SERVICES

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a global market place burgeoning with newly created regulators that oversee increasingly commercialized energy, water, and telecommunication sectors, there is a marked need for improved consumer service and communications. The challenge faced by many new regulatory bodies is how to interact with and meet the needs of their customers. The immediate issues that need to be addressed are: how to make customer service a priority; how to structure customer service departments; and how to put into practice effective mechanisms for consumer service and education.

With these goals in mind, the Academy for Education Development (AED) was tasked by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to work with the National Electricity Regulator (NER) of South Africa to explore best practices in consumer service provision by the regulatory community. The NER was acutely interested in this project as a result of its positive experience at the USAID-sponsored *Symposium on Public Participation in the Energy Sector* in Cape Town, South Africa, in March 2004. As a result, NER requested that USAID and AED provide targeted technical assistance in the area of consumer service.

Beginning in March 2005, AED representatives held a number of face-to-face meetings and working sessions with Ms. Margie Nkalashe, NER Director of Consumer Services, and personnel from the Consumer Services Department in Pretoria, South Africa. AED was provided with internal and external NER customer service and communication program documents from which to conduct due diligence. From these discussions and document reviews it was determined that the most impact-oriented and effective means to provide assistance to the NER were to: 1) develop a PowerPoint presentation, for internal and external application, on the importance and role of the NER's Consumer Service Department; and 2) produce a short best practices guide for regulatory consumer service.

This best practices guide originates from the NER's desire to expand and improve the regulatory customer service that it provides to electricity consumers. It reviews and analyzes customer service fundamentals in the service and regulatory sectors and defines fundamental characteristics of successful customer service for energy regulators. The guide applies these principles and examines three market leaders in regulatory consumer service in the energy sector: 1) the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) of Ireland; 2) Karnataka Electricity Regulation Commission (KERC) of Karnataka, India; and 3) the Office of Utilities Regulation of Jamaica.

This best practices guide is by no means intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive. Rather, it is an overview of customer service supported by three case studies. Yet, in its small way, it captures the essentials of customer service, and illustrates how a number of regulators in both developed and developing countries have made consumer service a focal point of their work, and how this focus is helping them to fulfil their regulatory mission.

The NER is fast becoming Africa's regulatory leader. The very fact that the NER was keen to collaborate closely with USAID and AED to review its consumer service activities and push for a best practices guide demonstrates their commitment to excellence. It is the mark of any successful organization to learn from others and to strive for improved service delivery. The NER is this type of progressive, emergent organization, and as its policy and regulatory mandate expands to include the entirety of the energy sector in South Africa, NER's Consumer Service and Communications Departments will be poised to meet these new challenges.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Many newly formed regulatory bodies focus their initial institutional development on capacity building and establishing themselves as independent regulatory bodies; developing the technical and analytical skills necessary to set policy and oversee market reform in their respective countries. Consequently, most of their day-to-day activities, training, and international exchange and assistance programs fall outside the parameters of consumer services and communications, which are often overlooked and relegated to secondary importance. However, consumer services in the form of consumer protection, complaint resolution, and public outreach and education are core functions mandated by law in most regulatory environments. The question becomes how to reconcile the institutional bias with the growing need for improved consumer service.

Consumer services are central to effective energy regulation, policy development and implementation. Yet regulators and other energy sector decision-makers often ignore these services, either because of a lack of understanding of their importance and necessity of a consumer-oriented approach, or because of an unwillingness to cede control over policy formulation. In fact, there is a growing opportunity and need for regulatory bodies to have an increasing public persona and to develop the ability to resolve consumer complaints and educate consumers on the regulator's role in distribution reform (unbundling or commercialization) in the country.

Fortunately, in today's energy marketplace, regulators and government agencies are starting to realize that engineering and finance are not the only skill sets needed to develop and implement effective change in the energy sector—change that will help create competitive markets, attract foreign investment, and provide an environment in which newly commercialized enterprises can become financially viable and more successful. Consumers and the general public are increasingly targeted and involved in energy sector decisions and regulatory affairs. It is no longer a matter of whether to involve consumers and to reach out to the public, but where, when, and how to do so effectively.

With these thoughts in mind, this best practices guide explores the fundamentals of consumer service, accepted best practices in the regulatory arena, and reviews and analyzes three case studies that represent energy regulators that embrace and excel in consumer service.

## **II. ROLE OF REGULATORS IN PROVIDING CONSUMER SERVICE**

The regulatory function has the potential to be the primary vehicle for consumer engagement in the power sector if all parties understand how to participate in the process. The establishment of a regulator is a necessary first step in creating a fair market environment in which energy supplies and services can be improved. Establishing consumer services during the development and introduction of the regulatory function is important in outlining the role of the regulator, providing processes by which different stakeholder groups (including government, civil society, consumers and industry) can engage in policy formulation and decision-making regarding energy strategy, and in ensuring transparent and fair monitoring of market activities and performance.

For consumer services and outreach efforts to be effective, the public needs to have access to information and to the decision making process. The consumer also needs to know that one of the regulator's responsibilities is to protect consumer interests and to act as a fair arbiter in the energy

marketplace. The role of the regulator as “fair broker” or “policeman” for the energy sector in the eyes of the consumer cannot be underestimated. If there are issues the service provider (utility) cannot resolve, the consumer needs to know there is impartial recourse through the regulator.

Providing excellent consumer service also involves educating consumers on the role of the regulator, consumer rights and responsibilities, and changes in energy sector policy. For example, the regulator needs to inform consumers about notices of tariff filings, their right to review accompanying information and to be present at discussions or hearings between the licensee and regulatory staff. Due to the nature of the regulatory structure, it is likely that the only interaction a consumer may have with the regulator will be regarding complaint resolution, tariff increases and rate cases, or environmental issues. The limited interaction a regulator has with ratepayers puts pressure on its consumer service delivery, and the potential impact on utility consumers is greater than in other sectors and industries. With fewer opportunities to impress, persuade, and positively interact, regulatory consumer service must be effective. Hence, if the regulator is to have more direct and visible impact on, and less negative interaction with, consumers it is likely to be through its consumer service function. It is not only essential that the regulator prioritize consumer services, but also that the quality of service it provides is high.

### **III. CONSUMER SERVICE – THE FUNDAMENTALS**

#### **1. “Lip Service” Given to Consumer Service**

Ask any CEO, bank president, office manager, minister, or operations support staff person and they will tell you how *important* consumer service is to their organization's operation and success. Repeatedly, heads of industry, the service sector, utilities, regulatory bodies and government try to convince their constituents that they believe in consumer service, proclaiming that it is their ‘mission,’ ‘#1 priority,’ and that consumers are ‘very important to our business.’ Unfortunately, many of these same “consumer friendly” executives go back to their offices, cut office support staff, fail to initiate a consumer service improvement plan, and implement policies and procedures that favor the bottom line over consumers and the provision of quality service.

It is a contemporary mantra of service-oriented economies throughout the world that the customer is the key to success. Yet how many of these same people are just mimicking what others say or think without ever actually considering what customers want, and how to develop systems that enhance customer satisfaction and create a service-friendly environment that delivers the best possible service to the customer. The reality is that, with a few notable exceptions, the level of customer service being provided around the world is either stagnant or declining.

The consumer service “dilemma” is especially acute in the energy sector, and plays a leading role in consumer misgivings and apprehension about market liberalization, privatization of utilities, and the development of independent regulators to oversee the unbundling and commercialization of the energy sector. Not only are consumers confused about energy sector unbundling and their service provider options, but they are also either ignorant about or misunderstand the role of the regulator, and the level of service that they are entitled to.

## **2. What Does Consumer Service Really Mean?**

As mentioned earlier, providing consumer service involves making available a quality product or service that not only satisfies the needs and wants of a consumer, but also *pleases* them. Yet the end results of good consumer service can mean so much more. It can mean continued economic success, increased profits and recognition, higher job satisfaction, improved company or organization morale, better teamwork, and market expansion of products and services.

Although regulators do not “sell” a product or service, they do need to convince consumers of the technical merit of regulating the energy sector, their integrity and impartiality, and their ability to resolve consumer problems and queries. Because regulators are not selling an actual product, the consumer service challenge is often more difficult. As the energy sector moves toward a more unbundled, commercialized operating scheme, regulators and utility managers can look to the market leader in consumer services—the retail sector—for lessons learned and best practices.

Think about the places where consumers enjoy doing business—restaurants, stores, petrol stations, suppliers, banks, etc. Why, aside from the actual product or service they provide, do people like doing business at or frequenting these places? Consumers probably find the service courteous, timely, friendly, flexible, interested, and a series of other exemplary qualities. They not only satisfy consumer wants and needs but make people feel satisfied. Consumers come to rely on a particular business and the level of service they receive to meet their needs.

Alternatively, there are businesses that consumers dislike patronizing, maybe even hate utilizing, but do so out of necessity. Maybe it is the Ministry of Transport for a new driver's license, or the local department store that carries a product one needs but offers poor and difficult service. When doing business at these places, one often leaves feeling abused, unsatisfied, and taken advantage of; the experience is wholly negative and future visits are only out of necessity (monopoly of service). In the case of a poor performing regulator, consumers are left wondering why their taxes or surcharge for energy service is going to pay for an institution whose efficacy and function are questioned. Why should a ratepayer support a regulator whose role is not understood and who is perceived to provide little to no service?

*Key statistical consumer data reveals:*

- Customers will spend up to 10% more for the same product at a business that offers better service.
- When customers receive good service they tell 10-12 people.
- When customers receive poor service they tell upwards of 20 people.
- There is an 82% chance customers will return to a company or organization where they were satisfied with the service.
- There is a 91% chance that poor service will dissuade a customer from ever going back to a company or organization.<sup>1</sup>

Good consumer service, whether by a regulator or service provider, results in consumer satisfaction, return consumers, and growth in business (or service). Poor consumer service generally results in consumer dissatisfaction, lack of return consumers, and dwindling support.

Consumer service, whether in retail or as a regulatory function, is about constant performance and ensuring a system is in place that seeks to satisfy consumer demand.

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<sup>1</sup> Bailey, Keith and Leland, Karen., Customer Service for Dummies, 2001.

*“A lot of people have fancy things to say about customer service, including me. But it’s just a day-in, day-out, on going, never ending, unrelenting, persevering, compassionate type of activity.”*

*-- Leon Gorman, former President of LL Bean (America’s largest catalog retail outlet)<sup>2</sup>*

### **3. Three Fundamentals of Consumer Service**

Three fundamental elements that must exist and be cultivated within the regulatory framework in order for good service to flourish:

1. Expand your idea of service (both internal and external)
2. Consider or reconsider who your consumers are
3. Develop consumer friendly service techniques and systems

If a regulatory agency can master these three fundamental elements, its consumer service is bound to improve and mature. Regulators, as evidenced by the three case studies included in this guide, will find that improving consumer service and developing an internal system to guarantee consumer service continues to be proficient is not the most difficult or costly endeavor in the world. Consumer service improvement is not like sending someone to the moon, but it does require understanding, commitment, time, and effort.

Regulators and utility companies that manage consumer service the best are those who develop policies and procedures and then stick to them. This may seem easy, and this guide will describe best practices in this process, but in an age of political transition, mergers and acquisitions, regulation and de-regulation, rapid management turnover and global competition, adhering to sound consumer service policy can be quite a challenge.

## **IV. THREE KEY ELEMENTS OF CONSUMER SERVICE**

### **1. Expand Your Definition of Service**

The way a regulator defines service shapes every interaction it has with its consumers. Limited definitions of service based on an exchange of information or limited interaction misses the overall point of consumer service. “Service” should provide the consumer with more than a product or action taken on his/her behalf, it should provide *satisfaction*. In essence, the consumer should walk away pleased with the result of the transaction or interaction—not just content, but actually happy with the outcome. In the case of the regulator, consumers should feel as if:

- the regulator exists to serve the consumer;
- consumer queries or complaints will be “heard” (registered);
- there is a fair and clear complaints resolution process;
- the complaint or query will be dealt with in a timely, effective manner;
- the regulator *cares* about consumer complaints and queries;
- the regulator exists to protect consumer rights and *fairly* oversee the electricity sector;

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<sup>2</sup> Glen, Peter. It's Not My Department. Berkeley, 2002.



- the consumer is welcome and wanted at public hearings or forums; and
- the role of the regulator is important.

Satisfied and content consumers will be supportive consumers that understand the role of the regulator and act as good energy citizens (e.g. paying their bills, not stealing electricity, supporting the function of the regulator, using energy efficiently, etc.).

Of course, it is not always possible to give consumers what they want. Most consumers want inexpensive (below rate of return) electricity, natural gas, or petroleum products. Unfortunately, these are market-determined costs and are beyond the control of the regulator. If one defines consumer service only as giving consumers exactly what they want then one has missed another key aspect of service: helping the consumer determine what they want. This is more subtle and difficult, requiring listening, mediation, and empathy on the part of the service provider. Yet by addressing this less obvious consumer needs one can provide the consumer with alternatives to their obvious desires (cheap tariffs) and get to know the consumer better. *Knowing the consumer is critical to success.*

## **2. Who are Your Consumers?**

Providing consumer service and interacting with clients means that the consumer will be heard and his/her problems will not go unanswered or ignored. It also means getting to know your client, his/her likes and dislikes, ideas, background, etc. Another important aspect is to listen to what the consumer is saying. If you do not understand what is motivating the consumer, you will not be successful in managing their needs. Do research on energy consumers, their habits, what they want and expect. The easiest and most direct way to get to know your consumers is through “live” interaction and consumer surveys.

In the market place, consumers, buyers, and clients want to pay a fair price for quality service or products, and feel satisfied that they received what they have paid for. They also want someone to take care of them, to understand their needs, and to answer their questions. Although the nature of regulatory consumer service is slightly different than it is in the commercial sector, the underlying principles remain the same. Consumer service starts with the ability to listen to the consumer and find out through polite questioning (or written questionnaires) what he/she needs or wants.

### *Getting to Know Your Consumers - Consumer Surveys*

Before spending the time, effort, and resources to develop a strategy for service improvement, a regulator should take action to establish what its consumer expects and wants from its service.

A baseline survey can provide a starting point from which to design and implement a consumer service improvement plan. A baseline survey will:

- Provide specific feedback on consumer satisfaction levels, wants, needs, and service requirements.
- Provide objective, valid data on consumer service requirements.
- Provide a benchmark for measuring consumer satisfaction.

Admittedly, surveys require the expertise of outside consultants or market research firms, which often necessitates incurring costs upfront. However, these resources are well spent if consumer service is to be improved.

There are many types of consumer surveys, including:

- Random consumer survey
- Company-wide attitude survey
- Target account survey
- Consumer exit survey
- Internet questionnaire

The survey types listed above have various merits, but the most commonly enacted survey is the random consumer survey. The random survey is the easiest to conduct and measures overall consumer satisfaction on a range of levels. This methodology surveys a percentage of randomly selected consumers, typically over the telephone, through mail, or in-person. Sometimes this type of random survey is done as an “intercept” whereby individuals are randomly sampled in high-density population areas via a short questionnaire. If an organization has never conducted a market survey or consumer survey, the random consumer survey is probably the best methodology.

If a regulator does not know what its consumers and stakeholders think about its service levels and performance, there is no way to inform its future consumer service activities.

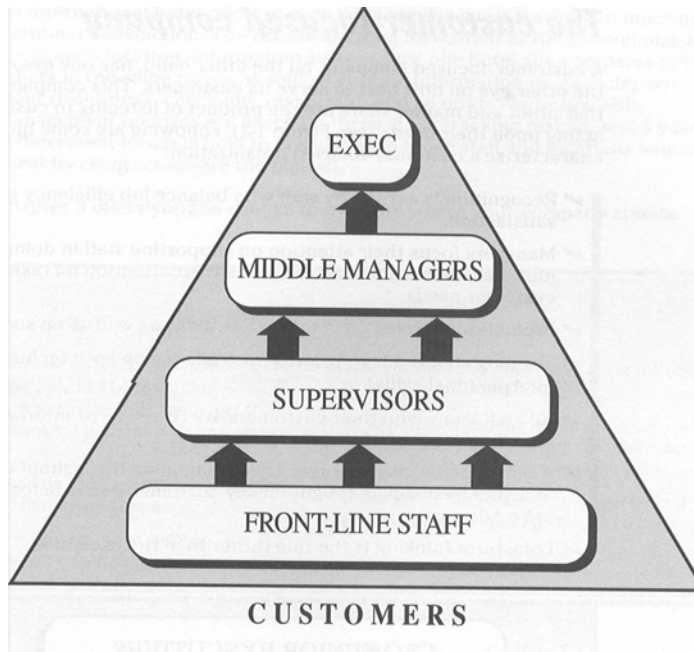
### **3. *Develop a Consumer Friendly Approach***

One common trait among regulators that provide good service is they have developed a system and attitude promoting consumer friendly service. Taking the “consumer friendly” approach means considering the delivery of excellent consumer service as the *most important* part of one’s job. The motto, “the consumer is always right” is derived from this consumer friendly environment.

The two main objectives of successful consumer relations are to *communicate* and develop *relationships*. Positive communication with consumers and developing ongoing relationships with your consumers are perhaps the two most important qualities to strive for in consumer service. Achieving these objectives does not take a significant effort, but it does not happen instantaneously either. Regulators communicate and develop relationships in various ways, including:

- Consumer/stakeholder forums
- Public or rate setting hearings
- Telephone and Internet queries
- Complaint filings
- Outreach and informational campaigns

While consumer service is technically distinct from communications and outreach, most regulators have a large degree of overlap and cooperation between their consumer service and communications (public relations/affairs) departments. They are mutually supportive activities aimed at informing and satisfying the consuming public.



*The Bottom-Up Customer Service Chain*

## **V. CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL CONSUMER SERVICE IN THE ENERGY SECTOR**

After reviewing the practice and function of consumer service in energy and utility regulators throughout the world, there are a number of distinct “best practices” manifest in successful, consumer-oriented regulators. These “characteristics” define an institution’s commitment to effective consumer services and represent the systems in place to make consumer service successful. These institutional best practice criteria set the standard for regulators who have embraced a consumer friendly approach and have made consumer service a priority function.

*Based on international standards, leading indicators of well-developed and resolute consumer service are:*

1. Stated institutional commitment to consumer services/affairs
2. Separate consumer services/affairs department
3. Commitment to public consultations/consumer forums
4. Developed standards of service
5. Defined complaint and resolution procedures
6. Informational products—electronic and paper
  - a. Web site with readily available and updated consumer information:
    - i. What the regulator does
    - ii. Pricing/tariff structure
    - iii. Complaints and resolution procedures

- iv. Connections/disconnections information
    - v. Contact information/useful contacts
  - b. Newsletter (electronic and paper)
  - c. Brochure/Hand-outs
- 7. Direct communications - readily available and easily reached Consumer Service Department
- 8. Developed Consumer Charter or "Bill of Rights"

Utilizing these eight criteria, three case studies have been selected and reviewed because they embody excellence in energy regulatory consumer service, namely:

- 1) Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) of Ireland;
- 2) Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (KERC) from the State of Karnataka, India, and
- 3) Office of Utility Regulation of Jamaica (OUR)

These case studies represent a diverse cross-section of energy markets and regulatory authority. They also capture the different stages in energy market liberalization and approaches to regulation in both the developed and developing world. In the case of the CER of Ireland, it falls within the European Union (EU) Directives on the Energy Sector and Market Regulation, while the KERC in Karnataka operates under the auspices of a federalized energy structure. OUR functions in a small but internationally connected market with ongoing coordination and collaborative business practices. Consumer service is a critical function in both established energy markets and those in transition. Whether overseeing the unbundling of utilities or working with a parastatal to commercialize and improve efficiency, protecting consumer interests and educating consumers remain core functions of successful regulators. While the three case studies included in this best practice guide are distinct, what they have in common is consumer service commitment, transparency, and clear success.

## VI. ENERGY CONSUMER SERVICE CASE STUDIES

### ***CASE STUDY 1: The Commission for Energy Regulation of Ireland (CER)***

#### Background:

The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) is the independent body responsible for overseeing the liberalisation of Ireland's energy sector. The CER authorises the construction of new generating plants and licenses companies to generate and supply electricity. The CER also has the key responsibility for regulating prices charged to customers by ESB, the Public Electricity Supplier (PES).

In December 1996, the European Community Energy Directive 96/92/EC ("the Directive") was adopted by all EU countries and facilitated the establishment of a single European market for electricity. The Directive provides the framework for participant countries, including Ireland, to introduce competition into national electricity markets, in a fair and transparent manner. Transmission and distribution of electricity were monopoly activities subject to regulation and the Directive guarantees rights of access to these systems by independent Generators and Suppliers.

The CER was initially established and granted regulatory powers over the electricity market under the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999. The enactment of the Gas (Interim) (Regulation) Act, 2002 expanded the CER's jurisdiction to include regulation of the natural gas market.

#### Eight hallmarks of consumer service excellence:

##### 1. Institutional Commitment to Consumer Service (Affairs)

The CER has a legal duty, established under Section 9 of the Electricity Regulation Act of 1999, to exercise its powers in a manner that protects the interests of consumers. This duty is necessary in ensuring the balance that a competitive market needs between protection of the consumer and advocacy of the open market. The CER has embraced this "duty" and has taken the consumer protection function to heart.

In carrying out its role of introducing and overseeing full competition in the electricity and gas markets in Ireland (complete by 2006), the CER seeks to operate in a manner that is open, transparent and accountable. The CER seeks to ensure that it:

- Protects the interest of final consumers (end users);
- Does not discriminate unfairly between players in the market;
- Secures all reasonable demands by final consumers of electricity for electricity are satisfied;
- Promotes safety and efficiency on the part of electricity undertakings as well as the continuity, security and quality of supply of electricity; and
- Without prejudice, to take into account the needs of rural consumers, the disadvantaged, and the elderly.

## 2. Separate Consumer Service (Affairs) Department

The Consumer and Corporate Affairs Division is one of four divisions within the Commission for Energy Regulation. Its functions include the following:

- Liaising with potential and existing electricity market consumers and stakeholders;
- Licensing new entrants into the electricity market and ensuring their adherence to licence conditions;
- Implementing Commission environmental policy;
- Implementing Commission consumer policy;
- Communication of Commission decisions/policy to the media; and
- Manage Commission contact with other statutory bodies and government department.

As one of only four existing divisions, the consumer service at the CER is of primary importance. Its role is clearly defined and its mandate is consumer oriented.

## 3. Commitment to Public Consultations/Consumer Forums

The CER is committed to a wide-ranging public consultation process to inform decisions about the Irish electricity industry. A series of public meetings and events are held annually attracting consumers and other interested parties. The schedule of upcoming events is published on the CER website as well as in leading newspapers and posted at the CER Head Office.

The CER also from time-to-time publishes consultation documents and conducts consumer surveys, some written by the Commission and others by other industry parties or private sector research organizations. These are published on the CER website and a notice advising of their publication is placed in leading newspapers. Electronic copies of these documents are sent automatically to those who have subscribed, while hard copies may be requested from the CER. All comments and results are collated and analyzed for input on various CER decisions, issues, and policy. Where necessary, clarification is sought from the individuals who have submitted comments. The CER, through its website and subscribers, is often seeking targeted input and evaluation from those most interested in their function and performance.

## 4. Standards of Service

CER has an established Standard of Service that helps inform its consumer service function. It is outlined below.

### *a. Quality of Supply*

EirGrid is the licensed independent company responsible for the operation of the transmission system in Ireland. The transmission system is the high-voltage network that transports electricity from generating stations to the Distribution System. ESB Distribution, a licensed independent division of ESB, is responsible for the operation of the Distribution network, which distributes electricity to the consumer's premises.

Both EirGrid and ESB Distribution are licensed and regulated by the CER. They are obliged to be non-discriminatory in the terms and costs of the services provided to all generators, suppliers and consumers. This ensures their effective operation in the competitive market and the continued safety and continuity of supply of electricity to all final consumers, regardless of Supplier.

#### *b. Enquiry Service*

It is a licence requirement that all Suppliers provide their consumers with the contact details of an enquiry service for emergencies relating to power supply. These contact details, which include the ESB Distribution Call Centre phone number for those consumers connected to the distribution system and the EirGrid telephone number for those connected to the transmission system, are typically provided on Suppliers' bills.

#### *c. Dispute Resolution*

All Suppliers are required to provide consumers with contact details of the CER, who may assist in any disputes between a consumer and a Supplier

### 5. Complaint Procedure

CER has a well-defined complaint and resolution process that it has established with the ESB (national grid) and ELCOM, the independent ESB Consumer Complaints Arbiter (Appendix A).

Suppliers of electricity and ESB Consumer Supply are committed to delivering quality service to their consumers. ESB Consumer Supply also offers consumers a number service guarantees relating to how ESB Supply deals with accounts, consumption and billing queries, which are outlined in the ESB Consumer Supply Charter. ESB Networks also offers networks consumers a number of service guarantees which are contained in a separate consumer charter, the ESB Networks Consumer Charter.

#### *CER Complaint Procedure (Abridged)*

##### *Step 1*

If you are an electricity consumer and have a supply related complaint, your first port of call should be your supplier or, in the case of ESB consumers, the ESB Consumer Contact.

##### *Step 2*

If you are a consumer of an independent supplier and are not satisfied by the response from your supplier, you should contact the CER, Telephone 01 4000 800 or email [info@cer.ie](mailto:info@cer.ie).

If a consumer of ESB Consumer Supply is not satisfied with the response from the ESB Consumer Contact Centre, one may contact the Consumer Supply Complaints Facilitator.

Or

A consumer of ESB Networks who is not satisfied with the response from the ESB Consumer Contact Centre, they may should contact the ESB Consumer services Manager.

### Step 3

In cases where a complaint is not resolved at this point, there is an independent body that can adjudicate the matter and resolve complaints. It is called ELCOM, the ESB Consumer Complaints Arbitrator.

ELCOM is an independent and impartial arbitration service overseen by the CER responsible for resolving complaints from ESB supply consumers and network related complaints from all consumers of ESB Networks, regardless of their supplier.

The Arbitrator deals with consumer complaints about electricity supply including connections, billing queries, metering, network repair service, supply outages, communications with consumers and service levels. It also has power to arbitrate on disputes concerning the ESB Consumer Supply Charter and the Networks Consumer Charter.

### 6. Informational Products—electronic and paper materials

The CER has a well conceived website that is user-friendly, easily accessed, well structured for the various energy sectors it regulates. It makes consumer affairs a priority and contains up-to-date consumer related information, [www.cer.ie](http://www.cer.ie) (Appendix B). “Consumer Affairs” for electricity and gas are at the top of each sector menu. The website is the centerpiece of its informational products and provides an interactive forum for consumers and other interested parties. Moreover, brochures, consumer charters, and a timetable for public meetings are downloadable from the website and are also available in hard copy at the CER offices. The CER website is one of the better regulatory websites available on the Internet.

### 7. Readily Available/Easily Contactable

The CER offers various means to reach its Consumer Affairs Department and the ESB, namely via:

- a. Web-based e-mail
- b. Telephone Hotline - CER
- c. Useful and extensive contact details for suppliers
- d. Direct office access
- e. CER mailing list
- f. Public meetings and consultations

### 8. Consumer Charter or “Bill of Rights”

In a joint effort led by the ERB Networks but in conjunction with the CER, a defined Consumer Charter exists for Irish electricity consumers. As in many energy markets, the supplier is the lead contact and developer of the Charter, but the regulator acts in a support function and is the ultimate arbiter in complaints that cannot adequately be resolved by the supplier.

(Please see Appendix C for the Consumer Charter in full)



### *Overview:*

The CER of Ireland embodies the eight best practice criteria for consumer service. It is an excellent model of information sharing, consumer access, and transparency on the part of a regulatory body. Its function and level of consumer service is in keeping with expanding European Union standards.

Its "Consumer Affairs" function is given a high priority within the regulator and systems and processes exist to work closely with energy suppliers to ensure consumer satisfaction. The CER's unique structure and relationship with a third party arbiter in the case of ELCOM regarding consumer complaints is a hybrid but effective. The CER also utilizes consumer research and public meetings to provide two-way communication regarding its function, consumer awareness and satisfaction levels. With readily available Internet access in Ireland, the website is the CER's focal point of information and communications. It is regularly updated and serves as a clearinghouse for regulatory information and public consultation. Consumer service is not a static function, and the CER continues to reevaluate and redefine this function. It is currently developing a more detailed and encompassing consumer policy that will include the gas market as well.

## ***CASE STUDY 2: Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (KERC), Karnataka, India***

### Background:

In the 1990s India initiated a process of economic liberalization that led to great change in the power sector. The central and state governments (India has a federalized system of governance) have attempted to reform and restructure the power sector to make it more financially viable. India once possessed state electricity boards (SEBs) that enjoyed monopoly status for service delivery. These were unbundled to form companies to work independently with minimum government and political interference. To oversee the unbundling, commercialization and regulation of the energy market place, a central electricity regulatory commission and state electricity regulatory commissions (SERCs) were established. Progress to date has been mixed in terms of the unbundling of utilities and establishment of regulators in each state in India. However, one leading example of electricity service commercialization and creation of an effective regulator is the State of Karnataka. The Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (KERC) is India's leading energy regulator and has distinguished itself for its commitment to consumer service.

### Eight hallmarks of consumer service excellence:

#### 1. Institutional Commitment to Consumer Service (Affairs)

One of the distinct characteristics of the Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (KERC) is the paramount role of the consumer. The consumer, from KERC's inception, has been identified as a central stakeholder in the reform process. The role of the regulator, among others, is to ensure fair consumer prices commensurate with quality of service. KERC takes consumer service seriously and values the role of the consumer in the regulatory process.

#### 2. Separate Consumer Service (Affairs) Department

Traditionally, the state of Karnataka has been a pioneer in consumer protection. It was the first state to set up a separate Board for Consumer Protection in the late 1970s. The Karnataka Electricity Reform Act of 1999 includes a unique feature stating that the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC) should appoint a senior officer (consumer advocate) to represent consumers before the KERC in all matters, proceedings, hearings etc.

Since its inception, KERC has acknowledged the importance of the role of consumers in electricity reform process. A Commission Advisory Committee was established with consumer representatives as members. KERC has also appointed a consumer advocate and established the Office of Consumer Advocacy (OCA).

#### *Functions of OCA are:*

- To empower consumers to participate effectively in the regulatory process;
- To represent consumers on all matters relating to power sector;
- To act as a clearing house of information to consumers on electricity issues;

- To arrange workshops and training programmes for consumer advocacy groups;
- To publish newsletters, fact sheets and other informative materials;
- To handle grievances and complaints of electricity consumers;
- To interact with the media;
- To conduct consumer surveys and publish reports; and
- To advise the KERC on matters relating to consumer protection

### 3. Commitment to Public Consultations/Consumer Forums

Over the last four years, KERC has sought to provide the maximum possible “space” for consumer participation in the regulatory process. On issues having widespread consumer impact, the KERC has requested public commentary and holds public hearings, as well as operating in a transparent and open manner, allowing access to its operating records and decision-making. It has insisted that the licensee provide comprehensive replies to individual complaints and provide adequate opportunity for consumers to present oral arguments. In fact, the KERC has interpreted its role in a broad manner to facilitate consumer participation even when not mandated by law.

Another key development related to public consultations and demonstrating KERC's special interest in consumers and stakeholders is its role in forming a consumer network so that it can act as a countervailing force to utilities and the regulator. The *Electricity Consumers' Network* (ECON) was formed with assistance from KERC and consists of members representing consumers, farmers, and other stakeholders. ECON is composed of nine main non-governmental organizations (but continues to attract new members). It is based on the premise that safeguarding consumer interests as well as equitable pricing and service delivery are more easily achieved by a small group of committed, knowledgeable consumers networking with expert organizations and individuals in the energy sector. As part of its consumer service activities, the OCA and ECON recently conduct a survey of electricity consumers and their perceptions about the quality of service and other related matters.

### 4. Standards of service developed

KERC does possess basic standards of service that inform their consumer service, but they are in the process of finalizing a new and more developed version.

### 5. Complaints Procedure

Protecting the interests of the consumers is one of the mandates of the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission. Consumer interest involves solving their grievances. Thus under Section 35 of the Karnataka Electricity Reforms Act, 1999, the Commission has formulated the Consumer Grievance Handling Procedure (Practice Direction No.1) which came into effect in late-2001.

*Below is an abridged KERC complaints procedure (see Appendix D for the entire process).*

- A. Lodge a complaint as per the procedures put forth by the electricity supply/distribution company. Exhaust all the channels available with the electricity supply/distribution company
- B. Approach OCA at KERC only after the electricity supply/distribution company has not attended to your grievance (or three months has expired).
- C. Your complaint will be acknowledged, filed, and investigated by OCA.
- D. The electricity supply/distribution company will respond to the complaint within FOURTEEN days from the date of receipt.
- E. In case the Commission is of the opinion that the matter is to be discharged through a hearing, it may hold a hearing and the Order of the Commission shall be implemented by the electricity supply/distribution company within Fifteen days.
- F. The electricity supply/distribution company shall report compliance to the Commission within seven days of implementation of the KERC order. Failure to implement the order makes the electricity supply/distribution company liable to action under the KER Act.

*\*To date, over 400 complaints have been resolved through KERC (Appendix E).*

## 6. Informational products—electronic and paper

KERC has a functional website ([www.kerc.org](http://www.kerc.org)) that is well-populated, perhaps even more so than the CER, with consumer service materials including:

- Pricing/tariff structure
- Regular newsletter;
- Consumer survey results;
- Public hearing schedules;
- Links to stakeholder groups;
- Consumer complaints policy;
- Legislation and regulations; and
- Overview of electricity sector reform in India.

The website contains valuable information for consumers and anyone interested in local energy sector events and activities. Consumer service (advocacy) is give a marked role within KERC but a lesser role on the website. Once inside the OCA page, it is generally user-friendly, but its graphics and layout are more limited than other websites. This is surprising because Bangalore, the IT capital of Indian and one of the leading IT centers in the world, is located in Karnataka. Layout and graphic design on websites are functions of bandwidth; perhaps KERC is catering to a diverse set of users.

The website also reflects the transitional nature of the Indian energy market as well as India's status as both a developed and developing country. The website is practical if you have web access, which many do in Karnataka. Still, written informational materials are an important part of the consumer service process for KERC and should not be overlooked. Hard-copy newsletters, reports, and brochures are readily available and distributed at public hearings, KERC meetings, and media opportunities.

*KERC's main written materials include:*

- Brochure No. 1 - Procedures for Seeking Monetary Claims
- Brochure No. 2 - How to Get Connected
- Brochure No. 3 - Putting Things Right: A Guide to Lodge Complaints
- Copies of the Electricity Service and Consumer Protection Act

Many written materials, including the annual report, are downloadable in PDF format from the KERC website.

## 7. Readily Available/Easily Contactable

KERC's OCA makes itself readily available to consumer queries, although it does not possess a "hotline" for queries and complaints. It does have an active presence throughout the State and works closely with ECON to reach out to consumers and stakeholders.

Its main conduits for consumer contact are:

- a. Web-based e-mail
- b. Telephone
- c. Direct office access
- d. Public meetings and consultations
- e. ECON – regular meetings with KERC

## 8. Consumer Charter or "Bill of Rights"

KERC and the suppliers in Karnataka do not have a formal Consumer Charter or Bill of Rights. Instead, consumers reference the *Electricity Service and Consumer Protection Act*. This act sets down valuable principles but is in need of update. There has been discussion in numerous states in India regarding the establishment of Consumer Charters but little headway has been made in adoption. It would be in the interest of the suppliers and regulator to develop a defined, focused Charter from which to base rights and responsibilities in the energy sector in Karnataka.

Added steps taken by KERC to enhance consumer welfare:

- Preparation of a directory of consumer organisations in Karnataka;
- Publication of a Compendium of electricity cases decided in Consumer Forums and State and National Commissions established under the Consumer Protection Act;
- Holding regional workshops on the "Role of Consumers in Power Sector Reforms"; and
- Publication of its bilingual newsletter 'Consumer Power' and "Vidyut Balakedara"

*Overview:*

KERC is a leading example of a nascent regulator in the developing world that has made consumer service a priority and has established the fundamental mechanisms to strive for increased consumer satisfaction. KERC is seemingly the most advanced and progressive regulator in India on many levels including consumer service. Its OCA is highly functional and committed to information flow and transparency. Furthermore, its close collaboration with ECON to promote public understanding and participation in regulation is a noteworthy achievement for a recently founded regulator. This type of collaboration with civil society enhances the role of the regulator and encourages information sharing and public participation. KERC's emphasis on transparency and the role of the consumer (stakeholder) in regulation is making the transition to a market-based electricity (energy) sector in Indian a reality.

### ***CASE STUDY 3: Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) of Jamaica***

#### Background:

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) was established by an Act of the Parliament of Jamaica in 1995 to regulate the operations of utility companies. The Act defines OUR's function as "the duty of the Office to receive and process all applications for a licence to provide any utility service required by virtue of the provisions of any Act, and to make such recommendations to the responsible Minister in relation to the application as the Office considers necessary or desirable."

#### Eight hallmarks of consumer service excellence:

##### 1. Institutional Commitment to Consumer Service (Affairs)

The OUR mission is, "To contribute to national development by creating an environment for the efficient delivery of utility services to the customers while ensuring that service providers have the opportunity to make a reasonable return on investment."

The stated OUR objectives:

- Establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers.
- Promote the long term, efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy.
- Provide an avenue of appeal for consumers in their relationship with the utility service providers.
- Work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment.
- Act independently and impartially.

##### 2. Separate Consumer Service (Affairs) Department (CAD)

OUR clearly prioritizes its duty to protect the rights of customers of utility companies. It is one of its stated functions and is integral to its policy role. If customers or stakeholders have a problem with one of the utility companies the OUR Consumer Affairs Department (CAD) will thoroughly investigate the matter and respond accordingly. Because OUR regulates three diverse sectors this is quite an undertaking. Under current regulations, the consumer must contact the utility prior to the intervention of the OUR. However, the OUR exists to safeguard consumer interests and the CAD is the main component of this responsibility.

##### 3. Commitment to Public Consultations/Consumer Forums

The OUR is committed to a wide-ranging public consultation process to inform decisions about the water, energy, telecommunications and transport sectors in Jamaica. A series of public meetings and events are held annually attracting consumers and other interested parties (see a sample public notice Appendix F). The schedule of upcoming events is published on the OUR website as well as in leading newspapers and the post office. A "questionnaire" regarding consumer service is also available via the OUR website (Appendix G).

Perhaps more significantly, the OUR was instrumental in the establishment of the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU). The CACU is an independent group of consumers, established in 2001 to provide the OUR with a forum where it could receive consumers' views on broad regulatory issues as well as their perspective on issues affecting relationships between utilities and consumers. The CACU advises the OUR on consumers' priorities related to the service quality provided by each utility provider, makes reports to the OUR on matters the Committee feels could affect the interests of current and potential consumers, provides timely feedback, opinions and recommendations on various issues relating to utility companies, acts as a gauge of public opinion and advises the OUR on issues that may impact on its relationship with the public, is an advisory body on utilities and raises issues of public concern to the OUR in addition to offering solutions to specific issues.

Another important function of the CACU is its role in advising the OUR on the development of regulatory policy, particularly those issues that may be of direct consumer concern. The OUR Consumer Affairs Department's quarterly reports are reviewed by the CACU, who then advises the OUR of the implications for customer service that might arise from its decisions or actions. The CACU also publishes reports of its deliberations and activities on a regular basis. The Committee is comprised of fourteen (14) members drawn from civil society/consumer organizations and individual members of the public.

CACU plays a leading role in consumer service issues in Jamaica and allows OUR to remain in touch with consumer needs and to be responsive as a consumer advocate. CACU also provides valuable quantitative and qualitative information on utility service delivery and consumer satisfaction to OUR. CACU and KERC (Karnataka, India) have similar consumer roles with CACU being more established and influential.

#### 4. Standards of Service

Standards for the Jamaica Public Service Utility were finalized in 2004. Specific standards focus on issues such as access and connection to electricity services, emergency response timeframes, metering, consumption, and billing, and complaints and queries. The standards also outline compensation due to customers in the event that the utility is found in breach of the standards.

#### 5. Complaint Procedure

OUR does have a standard complaint procedure (abridged version outlined below). However, due to the diverse sectors it regulates, the procedures are less defined and remain more flexible than other regulatory consumer service departments.

When seeking redress from a utility service provider, OUR requires that the complainant furnish information to substantiate its complaint or grounds for dissatisfaction and to prove that the complaints have been registered with the utility concerned.

Next steps:

- Upon receipt of information to substantiate the claim, OUR will seek to obtain specific information from the relevant utility about your complaint.



- To obtain further information and a better understanding of the complaint, OUR may find it necessary to conduct a site visit in conjunction with the relevant utility.
- All information obtained will be objectively evaluated and analyzed by OUR representatives. Thereafter, the consumer will be formally advised of OUR's findings and recommendations.

Complaint procedures and forms are available at OUR offices, on-line or nationwide at post offices (Appendix H).

## 6. Informational Products—electronic and paper materials

The OUR has an exceptionally well designed website that is user-friendly, easily accessed, and well structured for the various sectors it regulates. It makes consumer affairs a priority and is information-laden [www.our.org.jm](http://www.our.org.jm) (Appendix I). One could not ask for more readily available information. Virtually any regulatory consumer related matter is provided for on the OUR web. The consumer information function is further supported by the OUR Information Center (OURIC), which is both an electronic database and a physical office where research and queries may be registered. The website is the nexus for information sharing and is extensive in terms of downloads and updated information. The OUR website is one of the most encompassing regulatory websites available on the Internet.

A wide variety of information is available from the OUR and its website, namely:

- Public hearing notices
- The OUR Information Center (OURIC)
- Brochure
- Complaint form/procedures
- Legislation/regulatory rulings
- Tariffs rates
- Standards of service for water and electricity
- Newsletter - "The Regulator"
- Links to utilities/suppliers
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- "Breaking news"
- Press releases

Noteworthy on the OUR website is a series of downloadable (multimedia) public service announcements (PSAs) on regulatory themes such as bill payment, filing a complaint, and energy efficiency. Also the OUR newsletter, "The Regulator," the bi-annual newsletter produced by the OUR Consumer Affairs is available in electronic copy via the website or in hard copy.

## 7. Readily Available/Easily Contactable

The OUR offers various means to reach its Consumer Affairs Department:

- a. Web-based e-mail
- b. Toll free telephone "Hotline"
- c. Useful and extensive contact details for suppliers

- d. Direct office access
- e. OUR “guest book” (mailing list)
- f. Internet forums (question and answer)
- g. Public hearings and consultations
- h. Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU)

## 8. Consumer Charter or “Bill of Rights”

The OUR does not have a consumer charter per se for the various sectors it regulates. It does possess:

- **The Guaranteed Standards for the National Water Commission**
- **The Guaranteed Standards for the Jamaica Public Service Company - (2004 - 2009)**

These documents outline the standards of service for water and electricity but are not the user-friendly, easily defined and promoted consumer rights and responsibilities “charters” other regulators have developed. OUR is committed to consumers “knowing their rights” as evidenced by its informational materials and website. Hence, it may consider the development of a consumer charter or “bill of rights” in the future.

### *Overview:*

Admittedly, OUR has received a great deal of donor support and technical expertise from the USAID, World Bank, and NARUC, among others, and the level of sophistication in consumer service and communications reflects this assistance. Still, one must look to OUR as an excellent example of best practices in consumer service. Its CAD is well developed and sophisticated in its approach and its collaboration with CACU is to be admired and emulated. CACU acts as an information source, quality control mechanism, and consumer “watchdog” in relation to the regulator and various utility sectors. Not only does this relationship improve service delivery and regulation, but also it provides the regulator with much needed insight and credibility and with the public it serves. Many other nascent regulators are seeking to develop this type of working relationship with non-governmental organizations and consumer advocates (e.g. Armenia, Zambia, the Philippines, and various others).

The area of consumer service where OUR is most advanced is clearly in its use of the website as an informational clearinghouse. Having a series of PSAs available via the website is very progressive (these PSAs are also shown on television). There is a plethora of applicable and up-to-date information available electronically. This information is available in hard copy at the OUR CAD offices and in the OURIC. In a transitional environment like Jamaica it is important for any electronic information source to be complimented by written materials and a physical presence.

OUR recognizes this need and has ensured there are numerous avenues for information sharing, registering complaints, and interacting with the consuming public. The one area OUR may consider moving forward with is developed consumer charters for various sectors. They do possess a “standards of service” that could serve as a base for such a charter.

## CLOSING SUMMARY

Consumer service is one of the main factors in regulatory success. This best practices guide identifies three leading practitioners of excellence in consumer service in the realm of electricity regulators. What the CER, KERC, and OUR have in common is an expansive approach to consumer service, a focus on knowing and working closely with consumers and stakeholders, and a “consumer friendly” institutional approach that places the consumer and information sharing at the heart of the regulator. Management and policy makers in these three institutions have identified and prioritized consumer service and provide the personnel and resources for their respective consumer service/affairs departments to meet the necessary challenges. These three regulators avoid the pitfalls of paying “lip service” to consumers and stakeholders without actually delivering quality service.

Likewise, the CER, KERC, and OUR view consumer service as a day-to-day function. They grasp that inherent to providing service there will always be problems, queries, and consumer complaints from the market they serve. However, this interaction and consumer dialogue is not seen as a hindrance but as an opportunity to learn from consumers and to make a favorable impression. Energy regulation is a new function in most countries and CER, KERC, and OUR use good consumer service to support the growing prominence of the regulator and to promote consumer right and responsibilities. They have put in place service, data gathering, and information dissemination systems to work closely with consumers and various stakeholders. Through the Internet and face-to-face public consultations and consumer queries, these three regulators offer responsive, timely consumer service to meet energy market demand.

Despite the significance and impact of consumer service, the CER, KERC, and OUR are in the minority in terms of their commitment and institutionalization of this function. They are the exception to the rule. Nascent regulators as well as some established regulators often ignore or neglect the consumer protection and information role, choosing to deal with the technical and economic aspects of regulation. There are numerous regulators throughout the world who, despite donor assistance, professional exchange, and exposure to contemporary consumer service practices, do not make consumers and stakeholders priorities. For some, consumer service is not important, for others it is viewed as “messy” because people are difficult and necessitate protracted time and attention. In some cases regulators simply lack the capacity, training, and budget for such efforts. Regardless, like the Energy Regulation Board (ERB) in Zambia, who five years into its tenure was labeled by the media and consumer groups a “toothless lion,” there is serious risk involved with ignoring consumers and stakeholders<sup>3</sup>. The risk is even higher in an evolving energy market where regulation and unbundling are misunderstood.

In closing, the CER, KERC, and OUR remain market leaders in regulatory service and stand above their contemporaries. They serve as working models from which to learn. Their skills, acumen, and commitment to consumer service should be emulated by regulators seeking to satisfy consumer demand and elevate their role in the energy market.

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<sup>3</sup> With support from USAID, the ERB has since made consumer service and public outreach core functions and has initiated a nationwide Electricity Consumer Charter program.

## Appendix A

### Commission for Energy Regulation of Ireland (CER) – Complaints Procedure

All licensed suppliers of electricity and ESB Consumer Supply are committed to delivering quality service to their consumers. ESB Consumer Supply also offers consumers a number service guarantees relating to how ESB Supply deals with accounts, consumption and billing queries, which are outlined in the ESB Consumer Supply Charter. ESB Networks also offers networks consumers a number of service guarantees which are contained in a separate consumer charter, the ESB Networks Consumer Charter.

#### *Step 1*

If you are an electricity consumer and have a supply related complaint, your first port of call should be your supplier or, in the case of ESB consumers, the ESB Consumer Contact Centre – Tel. 1850 372 372. Network related queries should also be directed to this Contact Centre.

#### *Step 2*

If you are a consumer of an independent supplier and are not satisfied by the response from your supplier, you should contact the CER, tel 01 4000 800 or email [info@cer.ie](mailto:info@cer.ie).

If you are a consumer of ESB Consumer Supply and you are not satisfied with the response from the ESB Consumer Contact Centre, you should contact the Consumer Supply Complaints Facilitator. The contact details are as follows:

**ESB Consumer Supply**  
**Bishops Quay**  
**Limerick**  
**Email: [Complaintfacilitator@esb.ie](mailto:Complaintfacilitator@esb.ie)**

If you are a consumer of ESB Networks and you are not satisfied with the response from the ESB Consumer Contact Centre, you should contact the ESB Consumer services Manager.

#### *Step 3*

In cases where a complaint is not resolved at this point, there is an independent body that can adjudicate on the matter and resolve your complaints. It is called ELCOM, the ESB Consumer Complaints Arbitrator.

ELCOM is an independent and impartial arbitration service responsible for resolving complaints from ESB supply consumers and network related complaints from all consumers of ESB Networks, regardless of their supplier.

The Arbitrator deals with consumer complaints about electricity supply including connections, billing queries, metering, network repair service, supply outages, communications with consumers and service levels. He also has power to arbitrate on disputes concerning the ESB Consumer Supply Charter and the Networks Consumer Charter.

If you are a consumer of ESB Consumer Supply or ESB Networks and are not satisfied with the outcome of the two steps outlined above, you should write to ELCOM. The address is:

**ELCOM,  
ESB Consumer Complaints Arbitrator,  
39 Merrion Square,  
Dublin 2  
E-mail: [complaintsatelcom@mail.esb.ie](mailto:complaintsatelcom@mail.esb.ie)**

In order to process your request it is important that you include full details of your complaint and copies of correspondence between you and ESB on the matter. The Arbitrator will investigate the complaint fully and inform you of his decision. He may instruct ESB to do things differently, to award compensation or may decide that nothing needs changing.

There is also an ELCOM website [www.electricitycomplaints.ie](http://www.electricitycomplaints.ie), which has further information on the role of the ESB Consumer Complaints Arbitrator and provides a facility for submitting complaints online

## Appendix B

### Commission for Energy Regulation of Ireland (CER) Web site



<http://www.cer.ie/index.asp>

The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) is the independent body responsible for overseeing the liberalisation of Ireland's energy sector.

The CER was initially established and granted regulatory powers over the electricity market under the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999. The enactment of the Gas (Interim) (Regulation) Act, 2002 expanded the CER's jurisdiction to include regulation of the natural gas market.

The CER is working to ensure that consumers benefit from regulation and the introduction of competition in the energy sector. Organisationally the Commission consists of Mr. Tom Reeves, Chairperson, Ms. Regina Finn, Commissioner and Mr. Michael G. Tutty, Commissioner. They are assisted in their duties by Mr. Eugene Coughlan, Deputy Commissioner with responsibility for Operations, Generation and Environment, Ms. Cathy Mannion, Director of Retail and Consumer Affairs, Mr. Denis Cagney, Director of Energy Networks and Dr. Paul McGowan, Director of All Island Markets.

The CER's powers are specified in the **Electricity Regulation Act, 1999** and the **Gas (Interim) (Regulation) Act, 2002**. The CER is obliged to exercise them in a manner which:

- In relation to electricity does not discriminate unfairly between holders of licences, authorisations and the Electricity Supply Board ("ESB" – the State-owned electricity operator in Ireland) or between applicants for authorisations or licences;
- In relation to gas, does not discriminate unfairly between holders of licences, consents and Bord Gáis Éireann (BGÉ – the State-owned gas operator in Ireland) or between applicants for consents or licences; and
- Protects the interests of final customers of electricity or gas or both, as the case may be. In carrying out these duties the CER is also required to have regard to the need to:
  - Promote competition in the generation and supply of electricity and in the supply of natural gas;
  - Secure that all reasonable demands by final customers of electricity for electricity are satisfied;
  - Secure that there is sufficient capacity in the natural gas system to enable reasonable expectations of demand to be met;
  - Promote the continuity, security and quality of supplies of electricity;
  - Secure the continuity, security and quality of supplies of natural gas;
  - Promote safety and efficiency on the part of electricity and natural gas undertakings;

- Secure that license holders are capable of financing the undertaking of the activities which they are licensed to undertake; and
- Promote the use of renewable, sustainable or alternative forms of energy.

Without prejudice to the above the CER has a duty to:

- Take account of the protection of the environment;
- Encourage the efficient use of electricity;
- Take account of the needs of rural customers, the disadvantaged and the elderly;
- Encourage research and development into renewable, sustainable and alternative forms of energy and combined heat and power (“CHP”).

In the electricity market, the CER facilitates competition by authorising the construction of new generating plant and licensing companies to generate and supply electricity. The CER also has the key responsibility of regulating prices charged to customers by ESB, in its capacity as Public Electricity Supplier (PES). Similarly in the gas sector, the CER issues consents for the construction of pipelines, licenses suppliers and has powers to regulate prices charged to certain gas customers. The CER takes an active regulatory stance in relation to the operation, maintenance and development of the electricity and gas transmission and distribution networks, as well as approving tariffs for third party access to these systems.

In carrying out all its functions the CER endeavors to operate in a manner which is open, transparent and accountable. [http://www.cer.ie/about\\_us.asp](http://www.cer.ie/about_us.asp)

## **Appendix C**

### **CER/ESB Consumer Charter**

[www.CustomerCharter.esb.ie](http://www.CustomerCharter.esb.ie)

Dear Customer,

ESB has always been committed to putting the needs of our customers first. This is reflected in our 12 Service Guarantees that were first introduced in our Customer Charter some years ago.

ESB Networks is the division of ESB responsible for building and maintaining the transmission and distribution networks throughout the country. You, the customer, come into contact with ESB Networks when you seek to have a new house or business connected to the distribution network, when you call to report a fault, or if you have a query regarding your meter installation.

Over the five-year period, 2003-2007, ESB Networks will invest over €3.5 billion in a range of projects to further improve and strengthen the electricity networks countrywide. This is more than double the amount invested over the past five years and, when completed, this work will considerably enhance the security of supply to our existing customers, while creating the infrastructure to cater for new customers. At the same time, ESB Networks is striving to further improve the levels of service that we provide in our day to day dealings with customers on networks related issues. Our commitment to high quality customer service is set out in this Networks Customer Charter.

The 12 Service Guarantees that follow represent the targets which our staff will be expected to meet when providing you with the range of ESB Networks related services. Please contact us if you are not satisfied that we have delivered our service in accordance with these guarantees. Our confidence is such that we are prepared to make a payment to you if we do not deliver.

**John Shine**

*Executive Director Networks*

### **Customer Charter**

#### **Distribution Services Guarantee**

Distribution Service Guarantees

##### **Guarantee One**

###### ***The Network Repair Guarantee***

Even with the best will in the world, faults will sometimes occur in our electricity networks and you may be without supply. If this happens, please let us know immediately. We'll do everything possible to restore your supply quickly - our aim is to restore supply within less than 4 hours in 95% of cases. If you are without power for 24 hours after we were notified of the fault, you can claim €65 if you are a domestic customer or €130 if you are a business customer. You can claim an extra €35 for every additional 12 hours you are without power.

In exceptional cases such as storms or extensive disruption to electricity supplies, we cannot offer this guarantee. But we will always do everything we can to restore supply as soon as possible. To claim your payment under this guarantee, please contact us within one month of the supply failure.



### Guarantee Two

#### *The Planned Supply Interruption Guarantee*

In our efforts to supply the best possible service, we often have to work on our own distribution network to improve it or to connect new customers.

Such work may require us to interrupt your electricity supply. But if such an interruption is necessary, we guarantee to give you at least 2 days notice unless you agree otherwise. If we fail to do this, domestic customers can claim €35, while business customers can claim €130. To claim your payment under this guarantee, please contact us within one month of the planned supply interruption. Very short supply interruptions, and interruptions arising from network faults and third party actions, are exempt from this guarantee. We will make every effort to minimize the inconvenience in such cases.

### Guarantee Three

#### *The Main Fuse Guarantee*

If you lose supply but notice that your neighbours still have power, the first thing to do is to check your own fuses and trip switch. Assuming everything is in order, it could be that the Main ESB fuse has failed. Again please contact us immediately.

Our guarantee means we will call on you, free of charge, within 3 hours if you call us anytime between 8.30 am and 11.00 pm. Calls after 11.00 pm are guaranteed to receive attention before 11.30 am the following morning.

If we fail to meet these deadlines we will pay you €35.

### Guarantee Four

#### *The Meter Connection Guarantee*

Our Meter Installation and Connection Guarantee applies where there is an existing supply of electricity at your premises. ESB guarantees to have your meter installed within 3 working days for domestic customers or 5 working days for business customers. New connections require a valid ETCI Completion Certificate. More complex or multiple metering requirements will be arranged by agreement. We will pay you €50 if we fail to meet this guarantee.

### Guarantee Five

#### *The Connection Quotation Guarantee*

If you are building a new house or farm building, setting up a small business or renovating an older property, you need to send us a completed application form and certain information – such as a site map. In such cases, we guarantee to send you a connection cost quotation within:

7 Working Days when no visit to your site is required

15 Working Days when a visit to your site is required.

Connections to larger developments or connections over 100 kilowatts or Medium Voltage connections can require considerable planning input; however, we guarantee to provide a quotation within 90 working days.

If we fail to meet our quotation deadlines we will pay you €65 in the case of a domestic customer or €130 in the case of a large business customer.

### Guarantee Six

#### *The New Connection Guarantee*

Making a connection to a new house or premises can involve significant planning and construction work. We make every effort to complete the connection to coincide with the completion by the builder of the new house or premises. You can help by making your application for connection as early as possible.

Our guarantee to you is that, provided you have applied and paid for the connection at least 10 weeks prior to the completion of your electrical installation, we will complete your new connection within 2 weeks of receipt of the ETCI Completion Certificate. If we fail to meet this connection guarantee we will pay you €65. This guarantee is subject to the conditions in the letter of quotation having been met (e.g. wayleaves, ETCI Certificate, underground service duct ready) and there being no significant network reinforcement involved. In the case of housing schemes, where ETCI Certificates have been submitted by the builder, we will connect you within two weeks from the date you apply.

### Guarantee Seven

#### *The Voltage Complaint Investigation Guarantee*

If you have a concern about the level of electricity voltage supplied, we guarantee to contact you within 10 working days either to tell you about our voltage improvement proposals or to arrange to visit you to carry out an investigation of the complaint. Where an investigation is required we will contact you within a further 10 days to advise you of the outcome.

If we fail to contact you within the guaranteed timeframe we will pay you €35.

### Guarantee Eight

#### *The Voltage Problem Resolution Guarantee*

Where a problem with your voltage quality has been identified, we undertake to resolve that problem within 12 weeks, except in those cases where significant network reinforcement work is required. If we fail to honour this guarantee, we will pay you €50.

### Guarantee Nine

#### *The Appointment Guarantee*

If, at your request, we need to visit your premises, we will offer you either a morning appointment (up to 1pm) or an afternoon appointment (after 1pm).

It is a matter of honour with us to keep the appointments we make with you but sometimes it may not be possible to stick to the original arrangement. We will visit as agreed or contact you the day before the appointment should a problem arise.

If we fail to meet this guarantee, we will pay you €35.

### Guarantee Ten

#### *The Refund Guarantee*

Where we agree that you are entitled to receive a refund for any reason connected with your electricity connection, we guarantee to make the refund within 5 working days of agreeing the amount to be repaid.

If we fail to meet this guarantee, we will pay you €35.

### Guarantee Eleven

#### *The ELCOM Settlement Guarantee*

In the event of your achieving complaint resolution through use of the services of the independent Complaints Arbitrator (ELCOM) which involves a monetary payment, we guarantee to honour the financial settlement arrangements within 10 working days of your acceptance of the proposed resolution.

If we fail to meet this guarantee, we will pay you €130.

### Guarantee Twelve

#### *The Payment Guarantee*

ESB Networks aims to provide you with an ever-improving standard of service, and our Customer Service Guarantees are specifically designed to ensure this. In this Guide, we have detailed the payments we will make if we ever fail to meet these guarantees. In most cases you need not do anything as we will automatically make the payments along with our apologies. But when we fail to meet guarantee or when (in the case of Guarantees 1 and 2) we have received a valid claim, we further guarantee:

To send you a cheque within 10 working days, or

If we fail to do this, we will pay you an additional €35.

### ***Exceptions to Guarantees***

Sometimes, it can happen that exceptional circumstances prevent us from meeting your service request. Examples are where we cannot obtain access to your house or premises, major disruption to supplies, action by third parties (such as vandalism), risks to safety or where action could cause ESB to break the law.

While we cannot offer guarantees in these cases we will always make every effort to give the best possible service.

Any payments made under this Charter are ex gratia payments made by ESB for failure to meet the high service standards which we have set ourselves. Any payments are made without any admission of legal liability on the part of ESB. In the case of any conflict between the Customer Charter and ESB Conditions of Connection, the Conditions of Connection shall prevail.

### ***How to contact us***

If you have a loss of supply or any other service requirement, you can contact ESB Networks as follows:

**LOSS OF SUPPLY/EMERGENCIES: Phone 1850 372 999**

**NEW CONNECTIONS/VOLTAGE QUERIES/METERING etc.:**

**Phone 1850 372 757**

You can also write to your local Area or Divisional office, or, Email: [service@esb.ie](mailto:service@esb.ie)

## Appendix D

### Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission (KERC) – Complaints Procedure (In Full)

Protecting the interests of the consumers is one of the mandates of the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission. Consumer interest involves solving their grievances. Thus under Section 35 of the Karnataka Electricity Reforms Act, 1999, the Commission has formulated the Consumer Grievance Handling Procedure (Practice Direction No.1) which has come into effect from 18th October, 2001. This deals with the procedure followed by the consumers for lodging complaints with the Commission.

Here is what you have to do to file a complaint with the Commission:

1) Before you approach the Commission:

- Familiarise yourself with the grievance handling procedure of your electricity supply/distribution company. Ask and obtain a copy.
- Lodge a complaint as per the procedures laid down by the electricity supply/distribution company
- Exhaust all the remedies available with the electricity supply/distribution company

2) Approach the Commission only:

- When the electricity supply/distribution company does not attend to your grievance;
- When you are not satisfied with the response;
- When there is delay beyond THREE MONTHS in responding to your complaint;

(However, in the interest of the consumers, the Commission, at present, is entertaining complaints even if the above is not followed).

3) What does the Commission do?

- Within three days of receiving your complaint, the Grievance Redressal Officer (GRO) will send you an acknowledgment;
- If found correct, your complaint will be registered and a serial number given. This number will be indicated in the acknowledgment sent to you.
- Within five working days of receipt of the complaint, a copy of the same will be sent to the concerned electricity supply/distribution company for comments
- The electricity supply/distribution company will respond to the complaint within FOURTEEN days from the date of receipt.
- A copy of the reply received from the electricity supply/distribution company will be sent to the consumer/complainant
- The consumer/complainant should intimate the Commission whether the complaint is satisfied with the result.
- In case the Commission is of the opinion that the matter is to be discharged through a hearing, it may do so as per Chapter II of the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (General and Conduct of Proceedings) Regulations, 2000
- After the hearing the Commission will pass an order as deemed fit and proper.
- The Order of the Commission shall be implemented by the electricity supply/distribution company within Fifteen days

- The electricity supply/distribution company shall report compliance to the Commission within SEVEN days of implementation of the order
- Failure to implement the order of the commission makes the electricity supply/distribution company liable to action under the KER Act.

## Appendix E

---

### Report on How KERC Handles Consumer Complaints

---

#### Report / Analysis of complaints handled by OCA

##### DETAILS OF COMPLAINTS HANDLED

Complaints received up to 20th Jan. 2005	900
Complaints disposed off	658
Complaints pending	242

## Appendix F

### OUR Public Meeting Notice



The banner features the OUR logo on the left, which consists of the letters 'OUR' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with a white arrow pointing to the right integrated into the letter 'U'. To the right of the logo, the text 'OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this, the words 'PUBLIC NOTICE' are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a black background. The background of the banner is a blue gradient with faint images of water droplets and a city skyline.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

The Public is hereby advised that the Office of Utilities  
Regulation will on the  
**30th September, 2005 at 10:00 a.m**

be conducting a Hearing at its Office at the PCJ Centre, 3rd Floor,  
36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston services in St. Catherine

on the filing of an objection by Can-Cara Environment Limited  
to the granting of a licence to Dynamic Environment  
Management Limited to operate water and sewerage

**OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION**  
3rd Floor PCJ Resource Centre , 36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10,  
Tel: (876)968-6053 . Toll free# 1-888-CALL-OUR Fax: 929-3635.  
Website Address: [www.our.org.jm](http://www.our.org.jm)  
Issued by the Office of Utilities Regulation on September 29, 2005.

*Working for better utility services*

## Appendix G

### Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) Consumer Questionnaire

This will enable us to obtain a better understanding of, and respond more promptly to your problems.

Do you feel that our intervention with the utility company, on your behalf was fair?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Are you satisfied with the results of our investigation?

☒ Yes ☐ No

How would you rate our service?

☒ Excellent

☐ Good

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Poor

Would you recommend our service to others who feel that they are receiving unsatisfactory service from the public utilities?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Give reasons for the above

If any of our representatives has provided you with service beyond your expectations, please provide us with his/her name

Is there any other way in which you think we can improve our service?

Would you mind being contacted regarding your comments?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please complete below

Name

Title



<i>Organization</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Street Address</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Address (cont.)</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>City</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Country</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Work Phone</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>Home Phone</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>FAX</i>	<input type="text"/>
<i>E-mail</i>	<input type="text"/>

---

<http://www.our.org.jm/new/Consumer%20Affairs/Consumer%20Questions/consumerques.asp>

## Appendix H

### Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) Complaint Form

#### PLEASE GIVE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

Name	<input type="text"/>
Person to contact if not available	<input type="text"/>
Organization	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>
FAX	<input type="text"/>
E-mail	<input type="text"/>

- **Nature of Complaint**

- **Name and Address of Utility Company against which complaint is made**

- **Have you contacted Senior Persons in the Company regarding your complaint?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

- **Do you have any Documents to Support your claim?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

<input type="button" value="Submit Form"/>	<input type="button" value="Reset Form"/>
--	---

<http://www.our.org.jm/new/Consumer%20Affairs/Complaints%20Form/complaintsform.asp>

## Appendix I

OUR Website Home Page: <http://www.our.org.jm/index.asp>



**Access to Information Downloadable Documents, Please click here**

### Breaking News

::JCTA's and Reliant's Reply Comments on Accounting Separation... full story>>>

::Response to Accounting Separation... full story>>>

::OUR Rate Determination – JUTC 2005... full story>>>

::OUR Determination on JPS Annual Adjustment 2005... full story>>>

::OUR rejects some one billion dollars of JPS hurricane damage

### Know Your Rights

The OUR seeks to protect the rights of consumers of the utility companies... more

### F.A.Q.

Answers to frequently asked question directed towards the OUR. [Click »](#)

### Sign OUR Guestbook

### Latest Caption

Cool site!

### Sign Guestbook

### GET THE FACTS



Why the OUR? Find out in our [multimedia dramatization](#). [Click here.](#)

**The Public is invited to participate in a hearing being conducted at the Offices of the OUR...[more>>](#)**

The public is invited to participate to consider the rates proposed by Can-Cara Development... [more>>](#)

The Jamaican Urban Transit Company (JUTC) & The Ministry of Transport have asked the OUR to... [more>>](#)

The Office of Utilities Regulation is advising telecommunications service providers that all products (for example calling cards), public notices... [more>>](#)

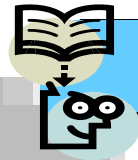


This site is best viewed at 800x600 resolution. Site Designed and Maintained by International Network Management Limited (INML)  
Website Last Updated: 10/21/2005 15:08:15

**Welcome to the**  
**Office of Utilities Regulation**  
**Information Centre**  
**(OURIC)**

**Role**  
**Function**  
**Services**





## Introduction to OURIC

**In April 2000 an attempt was made to organize the documents and books that had accumulated in the various offices and departments at the Office of Utilities Regulation. This was the genesis of the Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre (OURIC).**

**The official launch of OURIC took place on October 16, 2004.**



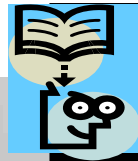
## Introduction to OURIC

### (Access to Information Act)

The Access to Information Act which was passed in June 2002 became applicable to all government entities on July 5, 2005. The Act gives citizens and other persons a general legal right of access to documented Information that is:

- *contained in Official Documents,*
- *not Already Available,*
- *held by Government Entities,*  
*which hitherto was inaccessible.*

***Upholding this democratic right can improve good governance, transparency, interchange of ideas and opinions, and aid in the democratic process.***



## Introduction to OURIC

(Access to Information Act)

In an attempt to fully comply with the Act, OUR is engaging in an inventory of all its records, after which, we intend to have a master list of all official records in the OUR.

### **Request for Information**

On July 19, 2005 the OUR received its first request for information under the Access to Information Act, 2002. The information requested was not at the OUR; therefore, the request was transferred to the relevant organization and is being monitored by OUR's Senior Information Officer



## Year in Review

OURIC undertook several projects over the past year, these include:

- ✓ **Upgrade to OURIC's Facilities** – *This resulted in two additional research areas & additional shelves to house our growing collection which has seen a 25% increase. The law collection was also merged with other collections.*
- ✓ **Brochure** – *The centre has been working on a brochure which should be in circulation before the end of this financial year.*





## Year in Review

- ✓ **User Survey** – A User Survey was conducted in September 2004 and the data collected was used to guide us in our upgrade process.
- ✓ **IABC Collection** – The International Association of Business Communicators asked the centre to catalogue, classify, monitor and house their collection of over forty (40) publications. We felt privileged to host the IABC collection because a member of the OUR is also a member of this association.

These are just some of the many tasks undertaken by OURIC.



## Resources

### ❖ Books



### ❖ CDs/Diskettes/DVDs

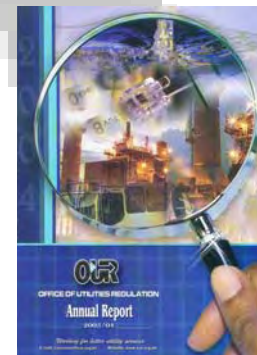


### ❖ Annual Reports

\* Local & International

### ❖ OUR Publications

- \* Consultative Documents
- \* Annual and Quarterly Reports
- \* Newsletter
- \* Determination Notice and Others



### ❖ Periodicals

\* Local and International



## Resources

### ❖ Utility Licenses and Applications

### ❖ Law Collection

- \* **Laws of Jamaica**
- \* **Subsidiary Laws of Jamaica**
- \* **Gazettes and other law resources**



### ❖ Newspaper Clippings / Advisories on:

- \* **Telecommunications**
- \* **Water**
- \* **Electricity**
- \* **Transportation**
- \* **The OUR in general**



**Presentation on the  
Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre (OURIC)**

2004 June 06  
Observer



**Press Clippings  
Database**

Newspaper Clippings and Advisories relating to the OUR, the utility companies and other issues are stored manually in binders up to April 2005 as of May 2005 electronically in a Clippings database. These clippings will be placed on the intranet allowing staff to access the database from their desk top.

Date: July 28, 2005

**Presentation on the  
Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre (OURIC)**



**Services Offered**

- ❖ **Reference**
- ❖ **Research**
- ❖ **Photocopying**
- ❖ **Selective Dissemination of Information**
- ❖ **Web/Internet Searches**
- ❖ **Reference Queries via telephone, mail, or in person**
- ❖ **Readers Advisory**
- ❖ **Information on Public Consultations and Consultative Document**
- ❖ **Current Awareness**





## New Additions List

Issue 15 - June - July 18, 2005

**OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION  
INFORMATION CENTRE  
(OURIC)  
NEW ADDITIONS LIST**

---

**Benchmark Indicators for Latin American and Caribbean Regulatory Authority Websites**

- Why regulatory websites are important
- Overview of the Study
- Observations

Note: This study includes an analysis of OUR's Website. This is a very informative study.

**Caribbean Wellness & Lifestyle Magazine** April 2005, Issue 1

- Age Management - How to age gracefully
- Combating Yeast Infection
- 15 Steps to Successful Writing
- Preparing for the Spiritual Journey

**Centerpiece** Spring 2005

- Cable Television Hall of Fame Class of 2005
- Comcast, Cable Center Team up to Create the Center's Major Public Exhibition

**Communication World**

Vol. 22, no. 2 Mar. - Apr. 2005

- It's All in the Delivery - Find the right style for your message
- Management Communication—Unlock higher performance from your employees

Vol. 22, No. 3 May - June 2005

- Employees: PR ambassadors, or your worst nightmare?
- Taking an Ethical Stand with your Public Relations Strategy

**Effective Corporate Governance: an emerging market (Caribbean Perspective on Governing Corporations in a disparate world)**

- Corporate Governance: history & genesis
- Global Trends and National Developments
- Corporate Governance: report card on Jamaica

**ERB News** Issue 2, April 2004

- Energy Sector: proposed legislative amendments
- Regulatory Independence
- Communicating HIV/AIDS Issues Effectively
- Kenya Electricity Grid Code Formulation

As a part of our  
**Current Awareness**  
Programme,  
OURIC places  
New Additions  
Lists on our  
intranet, which  
inform staff of  
new additions to  
our stock.



## The Catalogue

**In an effort to adjust to the changing technological era, we offer the facility of an Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), which makes inventory, searching and retrieval of the resources easier.**

**This can be accessed from a computer terminal in OURIC.**





## Clientele

The Information Centre is open to staff, students, researchers, the regulated companies and other members of the public.

### ***Opening hours***

**Monday - Friday**

**9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

**2:00 PM - 4:30 PM**



# The REGULATOR

Newsletter of the Office of Utilities Regulation

Vol. 3, No. 5

January - June 2005

## Reading Your Meter

by: Marsha M. Minott – Analyst Consumer Relations

**M**eters are instruments that measure and register consumption. By knowing how to read your meter, you can track usage and verify utility bills. A consumer who knows how much water and energy is used can find ways to conserve and ultimately save money.

Reading your meter is quite simple. The following diagrams illustrate how to record readings from your JPS and NWC meters.

### Reading Your JPS Meter

Electricity is measured in Kilowatt-hours (kWh).

- Your JPS meter may consist of four (4) or five (5) dials.
- The pointers "hands" indicate the reading on each dial.
- If a pointer is between two (2) numbers, the LOWER number should be recorded.

For Example...



The meter above reads 35152. To determine how much electricity is used since your last bill,

subtract your previous reading (actual/estimated) as indicated on your last bill, from your current meter reading.

**Example:** Current Reading = 35152

Previous Reading = 34720

Kilowatt hours = 432

This represents the amount of electricity used since the previous reading was obtained. Dividing the kWh used by the number of days between readings gives the average daily kWh consumption. If you suspect that your meter is malfunctioning, you should contact your service provider to have it checked.

### Reading Your NWC Meter

Your water usage may be billed in either thousands of gallons or litres.

The digital dial on your water meter is read from left to right. To determine how much water is used for a period, subtract the reading on your last bill from the current reading taken.

**Example: (Metric Meter)**



Cont'd on pg. 2

### Also Inside This Issue

- Expanding Jamaica's Options for Submarine Fibre Optic Connection
- Energy Tip
- FAQs



# The REGULATOR

## Staff

### Members of the Office

- J. Paul Morgan** - Director General  
**C. Courtney Jackson** - Deputy Director General, Telecommunications  
**Raymond Silvera** - Deputy Director General, Electricity

### Senior Managers

- David Geddes** - Director, Consumer and Public Affairs  
**Maurice Charvis** - Director, Analysis and Research  
**George Wilson** - General Counsel  
**Ansord Hewitt** - Manager, Regulatory Affairs  
**Carolyn Young-Scott** - Director Administration/HR  
**Brian Sale** - Financial Controller

### Editorial Team

David Geddes . Denise McCalla . Marsha Minott

**Graphic Design & Layout**  
 Dynamic Images

## OUR's Objectives

- To ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at reasonable cost.
- To establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers.
- To promote the long-term efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy.
- To provide an avenue of appeal for consumers who have grievances with the utility service providers.
- To work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment.
- To act independently and impartially.

## Reading Your Meter

contd. from pg. 1

The example indicates that your current reading is 635 (Only the numbers in the white area should be taken). If your previous reading was 630, then you have used 5,000 litres over the period.

### Detecting Leaks

Unusually high consumption may indicate the presence of a leak. If your meter continues to register (evidence of movement) when all faucets, taps have been closed, then a leak exists. If the cause of the leak cannot be determined, you may need to engage the services of a plumber.

### Interesting Facts!!

A leaking toilet can waste from 30 to 500 gallons of water per day!

### Faucet Leakage Rates:

#### *Drips*

60 drops per minute	=	192 gallons per month
90 " "	=	310 " "
120 " "	=	429 " "

### Estimated Billing for JPS and NWC

Customers' meters are to be read at least once every two months. In the event that a reading is not done, an estimate reflecting the average of the last three (3) actual readings should be used to bill the account. The revised Guaranteed Standards of 2004 stipulate that consumers should not receive more than two consecutive estimated bills. The receipt of three or more consecutive estimated bills constitutes a breach of the standard and affected customers should contact their service provider to claim the relevant compensation.

### Penalties

- NWC - four times (4) the applicable service charge  
 JPS - householders accounts - \$1000.00  
       - commercial accounts - \$8,400.00



# The REGULATOR

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## Expanding Jamaica's Options for Submarine Fibre Optic Connection

By Ansord Hewitt - Regulatory Affairs Manager

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) responding to a directive from the Minister of Commerce, Science and Technology issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) in August 2004 inviting applications for two licences to build and operate additional fibre optic cable facilities in Jamaica. The decision to issue the invitation for licences reflected both the policy makers' and the OUR's concerns that Jamaica faces a critical shortage of submarine fibre optic facilities for both current and projected demand.

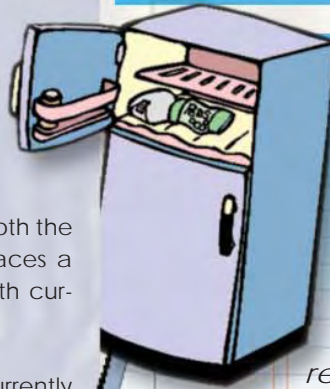
Specifically, it was felt that the 2.5 Gbps of capacity currently provided by Cable and Wireless Jamaica (C&WJ), the country's only provider of this service, is inadequate to meet the demand from the rapidly growing domestic and international voice and data markets. Additionally, there was also the concern that the prices for services delivered through ownership of international fibre facilities (international leased lines, broad band internet access, and a range of applications delivered through international telecommunications) were being kept artificially high by the shortage of facilities and the lack of diversity in ownership. A direct result of this is that Jamaica is relatively uncompetitive in regional markets for telecommunication services, and access to the internet by the vast majority of Jamaicans is being stifled.

Applications were submitted by Digicel, Trans Caribbean Communications Network (TCCN) a company made up of a consortium of local and international operators and Fibralink a company related to Caribbean Crossing which operates out of the Bahamas. The applications were processed and reviewed by the OUR and a report setting out the OUR's recommendations for awarding the two licences were submitted to the Minister at the end of the year.

All applicants presented proposals that would significantly advance the policy objectives outlined. Fibralink and TCCN in that order achieved higher scores on the basis of the established criteria, however, and were thus awarded licences.

The OUR is of the view that the grant of the additional licences will significantly improve the survivability and reliability of Jamaica's international fibre optic links. There is already some indication that prices may trend downward even before this, as C&WJ recently announced significant reductions in the charges for some of these services.

## Energy Saving Tip



\* *Ensure that your refrigerator door seals are airtight to prevent hot air from entering.*



Currently, the price for minimum broadband (ADSL) access (i.e. approximately 128 kbps) in Jamaica is US\$45 monthly, down from US\$65.95 in late 2004. With the introduction of additional providers in the market, the price for broadband access is expected to be reduced by more than a half over the next year. This reduction in price is expected to increase the penetration of internet access in households across the island.

The OUR now sees the potential for Jamaica to be located at the centre of an international communication web joining North America, South America and the rest of the Caribbean. Moreover the greater resilience of Jamaica's telecommunications linkages gained from the additional facilities should generate increased confidence in the country's capacity to keep international telecommunications intact even in the face of natural disasters. Such developments among others, are expected to significantly improve the country's prospects for the location of a number of offshore business operations.



# The REGULATOR

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## FAQS

### Ask the OUR

**Q.** Can a utility company disconnect my service for an estimated bill?

**A.** Yes. An estimated bill is a legitimate bill and should be paid. The estimated bill should however be based on the average consumption of the last three (3) actual meter readings, as stipulated by the Guaranteed Standards.

## OUR's Role

**T**he Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (the Office/OUR) as a body corporate. Under the Act, the OUR is charged with the responsibility of regulating the provision of utility services in the following sectors:

- Electricity
- Telecommunications
- Water
- Sewerage
- Public transportation by road, rail and ferry.

## Consumer Relations Unit (CRU)

**T**he Consumer Relations Unit (CRU) is a part of the Consumer and Public Affairs Department of the OUR. The CRU interfaces with the public on a daily basis. The unit advises consumers about the Guaranteed Standards, reviews, investigates and resolves consumer issues that have been brought to the OUR's attention via letters, telephone calls and visits by affected consumers.

We live by our creed:

***Together We Educate & Protect Consumers***

**Garfield Bryan**  
Manager

*If you have received unsatisfactory service from a utility company (electricity, water, telephone), you may be entitled to a compensatory payment from the respective company. Contact the Consumer and Public Affairs Department of the OUR or fill out a complaint form available at post offices islandwide.*

If you have questions about the role of The OUR or would like us to speak at any Community, Church or Citizens Association meetings, Contact: **David Geddes**-Director, Consumer and Public Affairs. 3rd Floor, PCJ Resource Centre, 36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10. **Toll free:** 1888-Call OUR.  
**Email:** dgeddes@our.org.jm

### Contact

3rd floor PCJ Resource Centre  
36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10  
Tel: (876) 968-6053-4  
Toll free 1888-Call-OUR (2255-687)  
Fax: 929-3635.  
E-mail: consumer@our.org.jm  
Website address: www.our.org.jm

*OUR + Utility Providers + Informed Consumers = Quality Service*



## Mission Statement

To contribute to national development by creating an environment for the efficient delivery of utility services to the customers whilst ensuring that service providers have the opportunity to make a reasonable return on investment.

Electricity

Telecommunications

Water

Sewerage

Transport

## Objectives

*The objectives of the OUR are to :*

- *Establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers.*
- *Promote the long term, efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy.*
- *Provide an avenue of appeal for consumers in their relationship with the utility service providers.*
- *Work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment.*
- *Act independently and impartially.*

## CONTACT

Office of Utilities Regulation  
3rd floor PCJ Resource Centre

36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10,  
Tel: (876) 968-6053-4  
Toll free: 1 888-Call-OUR (2255-687)

Fax: 929-3635.

E-mail: [consumer@our.org.jm](mailto:consumer@our.org.jm)

Website: [www.our.org.jm](http://www.our.org.jm)

Design & Layout by Dynamic Images



OFFICE OF UTILITIES  
REGULATION



**Are you having  
a problem with  
a utility company ?**

**The OUR can  
assist  
you.**



**The OUR investigates complaints  
against utility companies at no  
charge to the consumer.**





# OUR

## OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1995 to regulate the operations of utility companies.

### What are utility Companies?

These are companies operating in the following sectors;

Electricity, Telecommunications, Water Supply, Sewerage, Public Passenger Transport by road, rail and ferry. Examples of these companies are the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) and the National Water Commission (NWC).

The OUR is headed by a director general who is supported by two deputy directors general. The Director General is appointed by the Governor General while the Deputy Directors General are appointed by the Prime Minister.

### What is the OUR Doing for Consumers ?

The OUR seeks to protect the rights of customers of utility companies. If you have a problem with one of the utility companies the Consumer Affairs Department (CAD) will thoroughly investigate the matter, **and this investigation will not cost you anything.** However we recommend that you first discuss the complaint with the utility company. If you are not satisfied with the company's response or if they do not respond to you, get in touch with the OUR.

**Complaint forms are available at post offices islandwide. They do not require a stamp. Fill out as many as you need and leave at the post office.**

*You may also use one of our toll free numbers  
1888-CALL-OUR (2255-687) or 1888-991-2209  
to lodge complaints or  
get further information.*

## FAQs

### What are the Guaranteed Standards ?

These are an agreement reached between the utility companies and the OUR setting out certain levels of service for customers. If the company fails to honour the agreement the customer is entitled to a compensatory payment from the company.

### Can you give me an example of a Guaranteed Standard?

Let us look at three Guaranteed Standards. The Jamaica Public Service Company should have a representative at the site of a reported emergency within six hours. The National Water Commission should not send you more than two consecutive estimated bills, and in the case of both JPS and NWC, if your service was disconnected for non-payment, once you have paid up the monies owed, your service should be reconnected within a maximum of 24 hours if you live in a town and 48 hours if you live in a rural community.

### How can I get a copy of the Guaranteed Standards?

Utility companies are required to keep copies of the Guaranteed Standards and these may be obtained from their Customer Service Departments.

### Why does my electricity bill increase every month, even though my usage remains constant?

JPSCo immediately passes on changes in foreign exchange and fuel charges to consumers. When the cost of these go up so too will your electricity bill, even though you may not have increased usage. You should also look at the number of days in each billing cycle.

## Public Education

The OUR is committed to public education and consultation. We regularly organize seminars and town meetings.

### *Can I invite the OUR to speak to a group in my community ?*

Yes we welcome such invitations. If you would like a representative of the OUR to speak at a community, church or service club meeting, Contact the Communication Services Department by calling toll free 1888-CALL-OUR or 1888-991-2209. We will try to facilitate an early and convenient date.



**The OUR receives and reviews applications for licenses and rate reviews from the utility companies.**

**The OUR also investigates possible breaches of license conditions by the company and takes enforcement action where appropriate, all designed to protect the interests of consumers.**

# JAMAICA PUBLIC SERVICE CO LTD

## Guaranteed Service Standards 2004 -2009

Code	Focus	Description	Performance Measure
EGS 1(a)	Access	Connection to Supply - New Installations	New service Installations within 5 working days.
EGS 1(b)	Access	Connection to Supply - Simple Connections	Connections within 4 working days where supply and meter already on premises
EGS 2(a)	Access	Complex Connection to supply	Between 30 and 100m of existing distribution line i- estimate within 10 working days ii- connection within 30 working days after payment
EGS 2(b)	Access	Complex Connection to supply	Between 101 and 250m of existing distribution line i- estimate within 15 working days ii- connection within 40 working days after payment
EGS 3	Response to Emergency	Response to Emergency	Response to Emergency calls within 6 hours
EGS 4	Billing Punctuality	Issue of First bill	Produce and dispatch first bill within 45 working days after service connection
EGS 5(a)	Complaints/Queries	Acknowledgements	Acknowledge written queries within 5 working days
EGS 5(b)	Complaints/Queries	Investigations	Complete investigation within 30 working days
EGS 5(c)	Complaints/Queries	Investigations involving 3rd party	Complete investigation within 60 working days if 3rd party involved
EGS 6(a)	Reconnection	Reconnection after Payments of Overdue amounts - urban areas	Urban reconnection within 1 day
EGS 6(b)	Reconnection	Reconnection after Payments of Overdue amounts - rural areas	Rural - reconnection within 2 days
EGS 7	Estimated Bills	Frequency of Meter reading	Should be not more than two(2) consecutive estimated bills (where company has access to meter).
EGS 8	Estimation of Consumption	Method of estimating consumption	An estimated bill should be based on the average of the last three (3) actual readings (first 6 bills of new accounts excepted)
EGS 9	Meter Replacement	Timeliness of Meter Replacement	Maximum of 20 business days to replace meter after detection of fault
EGS 10	Billing Adjustments	Timeliness of adjustment to customer's account	Where necessary, customer must be billed for adjustment within one (1) billing period of identification of error
EGS12	Compensation	Making compensatory payments	Response to claim for compensation within 45 days of verification of breach

### Payment of Compensation

A breach of any of the above guaranteed standards by the Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd (JPS) will attract

compensation of \$1,000 for residential customers and \$8,400 for Rates 40, 40a, & 50 customers. This amount should be credited to the customer's account by the JPS within 45 days of verification of the breach **after a claim is made.**